

Submitted by: Calida Jones, Board President CT Arts Alliance, Councilwoman State Arts Council

Good afternoon co-chairs Hartley and Meskers, Vice-chairs Rahman and Fazzino, Ranking Members Martin and Harrison and members of the Commerce Committee.

My name is Calida Jones and I am the Board President for CT Arts Alliance and a councilwoman for the State Arts Council. Within our state arts landscape, I'm a musician, a music educator, and an alum of The Hartt School at the University of Hartford. As a current resident of Windsor, I'd like to Thank Rep. Garibay for her support of this bill!

I'd like to thank the committee for raising the bill and for recognizing the importance of arts, culture and tourism to the state's economy and workforce. I'd like to uplift that this bill begins a conversation on the Funding Roadmap proposal presented by Connecticut Arts Alliance, Connecticut Humanities, and Connecticut Tourism Coalition to provide meaningful, reliable, and equitable investment in these important contributors to the state's economy and workforce.

It is imperative that we continue to actively center Equity with how funding is distributed state-wide. To do otherwise perpetuates the consistent funding challenges for organizations that are intentionally grass roots led, individual artists, and organizations especially those led by Black, Indigenous, and People of color. There continues to be challenges with consistency in how funds are allocated state-wide. I remain hopeful that If our state truly wants to be inclusive, and truly equitable there will be a disruption in the way money is allocated across the state. I'm hopeful that agitating the current systems, processes and voices in the decision room will shake up our current funding practices. In my opinion and honestly, this would achieve honoring, uplifting, and funding the work and creativity of every single Connecticut artist and organization.

Additionally, if the cuts are approved and we don't receive more intentional funding, then we as a state are essentially saying individuals who graduate from institutions in our state should leave and go find opportunities elsewhere. We have a unique opportunity to create funding opportunities that can create new jobs, and businesses within arts and culture state-wide. This will also affect our tourism in a negative way. We have got to find a better strategy to keep our up and coming creatives engaged in our state. Visibility of tourism is important. It will absolutely take consistent and long-term funding to continue having folks visit our state.

Thank you for raising House Bill 6692 as the beginning of an important conversation on more meaningful, reliable, and equitable state investments in arts, culture and tourism. I appreciate your support for our community and look forward to working with you to make the funding roadmap a reality.